

**Ben's Place:** Ben Dittman, 85, retired Green Valley businessman, talks about life in the rural Shawano

County community. He still tinkers with cars and machinery at his downtown garage each day.

# Stores gone, but people stayed

By Karil Van Boxel

Press-Gazette

**GREEN VALLEY** — It's peaceful, picturesque and tranquil.

This Shawano County community on Highway E, one mile west of Wisconsin 32, is all its name implies.

From the co-op to the two taverns on the main street, Green Valley has a cared-for look.

"Almost everybody is rather laid-back," Postmaster Carol Hudson said. "You're always watching out for your neighbor."

**Press-Gazette photos by Sandee Gerbers**

Hudson, 48, has been here long enough

to know. Her folks once ran a ballroom that featured big bands and drew people from miles around. It closed two years ago.

"Red Nichols and his Five Pennies played here once," she recalled. "He sat at our kitchen table and we kids got his autograph."

"In the '40s, I didn't hardly miss a dance there," said Alvin Schroeder, 67, 9123 County E, as he and other retired men played sheephead at Siebert's Bar.

They talked about changes and the Green Valley Homecoming, an annual event that included a parade and dinner until it was discontinued in 1980.

The grocery stores, bank, butcher shop, pickle factory, stockyard and railroad also are gone.

The people stayed. Some moved in. Many retired.

They drive to nearby Krakow, Pulaski or Oconto Falls for groceries and gas. The distance to Green Bay, where Don Siebert works, is 28 miles.



**Cat lover:** Paul Hein sits at home with his adopted cats.

Siebert and his wife, Deborah, moved here from Ashwaubenon two years ago to buy a tavern. It was a change for daughter Shelly, 10.

"But there are a lot of kids around here," Deborah Siebert said. "She's made lots of friends."

Jeff Simon, 37, Green Valley Feed Mill manager, said the bank closing slowed down the community. "It was one more drawing card for the town. If the farmers came to town, they stopped here."

The feed mill, started near the turn of the century, became a farmer-owned cooperative in 1932. It includes a fertilizer plant, hardware store and locker plant.

The bank closed in 1989 when an affiliate expanded in Krakow. Former manag-

er Bob Rundquist, 49, bought the building last year and, with his wife, Kaye, opened Village Crafts there on Jan. 10.

By March they had items on consignment from 138 area crafters. The offices and board room contain color coordinated items. Christmas decorations can be found there year-round.

The vault now displays old cash boxes and memorabilia.

"There are so many talented people in the area," Kaye Rundquist, 45, said. "They could open shops in their own homes."

Hudson's Bar across the street has its own claim to fame — Russ Hudson's Friday night perch fry.

Hudson, husband of the postmaster, said he came from a large family and learned to cook at home. When he isn't running the bar, he works at his 52-head dairy farm.

Ben Dittman, 85, goes downtown daily to the building that housed his farm implement dealership and where he lived upstairs for more than 30 years. It's called Green Valley garage today, or as a sign above the counter says, "Ben's Place."

He still tinkers with cars, but said his real job is to put wood in the stove and talk with his frequent visitors.

"The people were friendly," he said of his reason for staying. "Years ago, you could sit on a bench in front of the building and the kids would come over to visit."

Paul Hein, 78, finds Green Valley perfect for Callie, Gypsy and his many other cats. He moved to Green Valley 20 years ago after 35 years in Milwaukee.

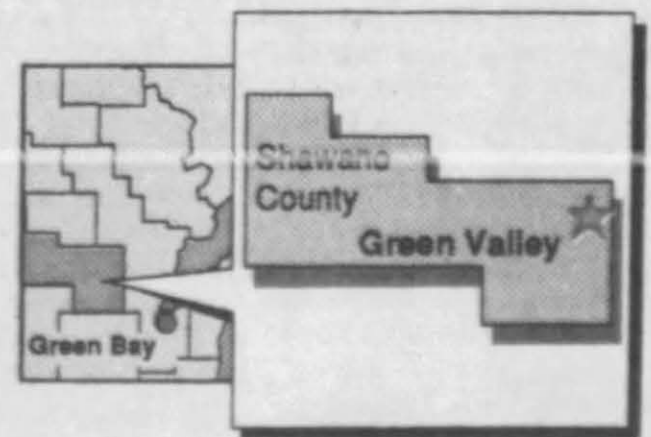
"They're good company," he said of the felines.

■ **Next week:** Pensaukee in Oconto County



**Banking on crafts:** Kaye and Bob Rundquist arrange the chil-

dren's room of their Village Crafts store in a former bank.



## The Green Valley file

□ **Population:** 95  
 □ **History:** William Donaldson, the first town chairman, named the community for its many pine, hemlock and evergreen trees. It originally was Greenvallley when established on April 18, 1907.

The name was changed to two words on July 31, 1957.

□ **Tidbits:** The largest employer is the Green Valley Feed Mill with 18. Children attend Pulaski School District schools.